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HRADLINE: Scientists make (

BYLINE: James Adams, Washir

BODY:

RUSSIA has created a pc in biological weapons. A va days, it has been genetical

''They have done the un cure,'' said one intelligen

He added: ''If we know .

The toxin is so powerfu theoretically, to kill half

Note : Some errors but zenerally correct. The "town" is actually B. anchruis spores.

P.J.

Details of the new agent were revealed by accident during a meeting of 160 scientists at St Alfred's College in Winchester last month. The conference was called to look for means of combating anthrax in animals.

There was consternation when a member of the Russian delegation announced that he and his colleagues had used genetic engineering to make a new strain of anthrax resistant to any of the most common antibiotics that might be used to treat the illness.

''What is so extraordinary is that the Russians have chosen to experiment with and then develop a weapon that is deadly to man,'' said one intelligence source.

"It is totally irresponsible."

Russia has a long history of involvement with research into anthrax. In 1979, an explosion at the Institute of Microbiology and Virology on the outskirts of Sverdlovsk killed more than 100 people.

Although the authorities blamed contaminated meat for the deaths, they were caused by the release of a small quantity of anthrax spores which contaminated 200 square kilometres of land.

In 1989 Vladimir Pasechnik, a Russian scientist, defected to Britain and revealed that for more than a decade thousands of Russian scientists had been secretly perfecting new biological weapons.

Since then, successive American presidents and British prime ministers have tried in variate get Russia to desist. Despite the diplomatic pressure,

President Borls Yeltsin has been unable to force the military to halt the research. At the same time, the military has been actively selling biological weapons technology. During the Gulf war, the allies warned Iraq that the use of anthrax against their troops would have prompted nuclear retaliation.

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